



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

**Russ Chew 1-800-FAA-NEWS Phone Message
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Hello, this is Russ Chew with this week's update for February 17th.

As you know, aviation is a key economic engine worldwide, and it's hard to overstate how important aviation and aerospace industries are to the global economy. For this reason, one of the goals of our Flight Plan is to uphold international leadership. Our ability to export safety, technology, experience, and advice, pays real dividends for the U.S. economy and the traveling public throughout the world.

This week, I attended the Maastricht ATC Conference in the Netherlands where I spoke on the evolution of the ATO. I was there with hundreds of industry professionals, from over eighty countries, to discuss strategies in providing safer and more efficient air navigation services.

ATC providers across the world are focusing on how to achieve operational excellence; improve financial discipline; and increase capacity; especially in central Europe where enroute traffic growth and congestion mimics the Northeast Region of the United States. In fact, we're facing foreign countries who want to take over ATC for airspace that we have controlled in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Even though we are working hard to retain control over these areas, this is just a glimpse of things to come. So operational excellence is even more important as we compete for this business, because losing our international authority to control these areas would just make the rest of our system that much more expensive to operate. That's why our Flight Plan emphasizes international leadership along with safety and operational excellence.

The congressional hearing season is underway, and this week Mike Cirillo, Vice President for System Operations, testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on how the air traffic system improvements are translating into cost savings for the air carriers. This couldn't come at a more crucial time for our customers. In January of last year, airlines paid one dollar and thirty-three cents for a gallon of Jet A fuel. But this last January, a gallon sold for one dollar and eighty-one cents; an increase that cost the airline industry ten billion dollars in 2005.

Some of the new improvements Mike addressed included the Florida Airspace Optimization program; part of the airspace redesign which has reduced delays on routes heading to Florida from Boston, New York and Washington. This has created a projected cost savings of eighteen point two million dollars per year. The ATO's Traffic Flow Management programs provides about \$340 million in savings every year, while the User Request Evaluation Tool (URET) saved the airlines about 25 million miles, or \$175 million dollars, in the last fiscal year.

Mike also mentioned our successful implementation of Domestic Reduced Vertical Separation Minimums, and the Advanced Technologies and Oceanic Procedures program. These were very significant and challenging achievements last year, and everyone in the ATO and FAA – controllers, technicians, engineers, managers, and supervisors – should be proud of their well-deserved credit for this.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate five outstanding Technical Ops employees who recently retired from the Houston Air Route Traffic Control Center. These individuals have a cumulative total of 200 years of government service -- a very significant contribution to the agency – and our country.

Gerald "Mick" Mikuenski retired with forty-seven years of service; Art Zepeda supported the government for forty-one years; and Henry Benson retired with thirty-three years of service. All three retired from the System Operations Center as Operations Managers. Mick, Art and Henry played key roles, supporting "twenty-four seven" the Technical Ops Operation.

Joseph ("Joe") Pfeffer (FIGH FER) retired with forty-four years of service, and Barbara Wagner with thirty-five years. Both retired from the Auto System Support Center as Computer Operators. So, my personal congratulations and best wishes for all of you in your retirement.

That's it for this week. Thanks for listening, and I'll talk to you again next week.